

CONCURRENT WORK SESSION
Thursday, September 5, 1991

SAFETY

Chairperson

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Section Head, Traffic and Safety
Kentucky Transportation Center

Speakers

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Associate Vice President
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TRAFFIC SAFETY AND PUBLIC INFORMATION/ RELATIONS

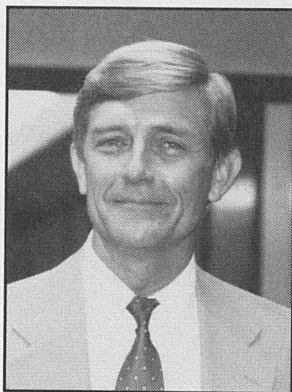
Bill Seymour

I would like to share with you information on three separate efforts that are, or have been, underway in the Louisville area related to the general topic "Traffic Safety and Public Information/Relations." The three subjects are 1) interstate reconstruction, 2) efforts to lay the groundwork for a freeway incident management program, and 3) Road-wise educational spot announcements.

Interstate Reconstruction

As most of you are aware, Louisville has had its interstate highways under reconstruction or rehabilitation for the past seven years. A portion of I-64 was widened, I-71 was rehabilitated, I-65 was reconstructed south of the Watterson, and the Watterson Expressway's reconstruction is still in progress. During those years, the Snyder Freeway also was completed.

The Watterson reconstruction is a \$325 million project. For several years, our construction personnel was overseeing \$200 million of active construction projects. We, like many other urban areas, were rebuilding interstates (some sections with 100,000 Average Daily Traffic) while maintaining traffic on them. Obviously, during this intensive reconstruction, safety for both the motorists and the worker was vitally important.



For the most part, the reconstruction involved minimal disruption to traffic. Of course, lane closures were only allowed at night and short total stoppage (i.e., for setting bridge beams) of traffic was allowed only between 2:00 a.m. and 4:00 a.m.

Construction signing conveyed information to motorists and modifications regularly

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occurred as construction progressed. Notification signs were used to convey specific information about closures (permanent or temporary) so the daily user would be given advance notice of situations and make adjustments accordingly.

Press releases were and are being used extensively regarding the construction. The local newspaper prints the "Road Show," a status or listing of conditions and upcoming things to watch for. And, occasionally feature articles have been written detailing the work. Communication and coordination with helicopter traffic-tracker Ron Robertson has been excellent and timely information has been aired during drive time.

A task force was formed to review construction or traffic control plan changes always with an eye on traffic safety. This interdisciplinary group was composed of design, construction, and traffic personnel from both the district and central offices, the contractor, and FHWA. It was very effective and efficient in providing timely reviews and decisions regarding plan phasing or traffic control revisions.

Periodic traffic control reviews have been essential and have involved extensive coordination and cooperation between our construction and traffic sections. These reviews were not only for safety but risk management as well.

In Chicago, when the Dan Ryan Expressway was reconstructed, pamphlets were produced and distributed as a public information tool describing the reconstruction work. Their slogan was "Don't Shout, Re-route" with advice to stay off the Dan Ryan Expressway during construction. Indiana is currently using a cone character sign asking motorists for "Patience Please" when entering the construction area on I-64 at the Sherman-Minton Bridge in Louisville and a cone character sign with "Thank You" when leaving the construction zone. Simple but innovative and informative methods such as these should be beneficial in public relations.

Freeway Incident Management

An effort is underway in the Louisville area aimed at alleviating traffic congestion through the establishment of a Freeway Incident Management Program. As we all know, urban freeway congestion is one of the most serious problems facing transportation engineers today. Urban freeway congestion is costing the nation billions of dollars a year in lost productivity and fuel. It also is apparent the day of new freeway construction is generally coming to a close. And, practically speaking, there are limitations on how many times a freeway can be widened. Thus, more and more emphasis is being placed on better utilization and management of what we have. That is, we expect to continue to move from highway building to highway management.

It is expected the new Federal Highway Act will include these four categories: pavement management, bridge management, safety management, and congestion management. It is also anticipated that cities over 200,000 population will be required to have a congestion management program.

Intelligent Vehicle/Highway Systems (IVHS) has the industry buzzing with high-tech ways of improving safety and efficiency. Indeed, Freeway Incident Management is a part of Advanced Traffic Management Systems (ATMS)—one category of IVHS.

In March 1991, the first meeting was held of a Freeway Incident Management Task Force for the Louisville area. The task force was organized by the Kentucky Department of Highways. Since Louisville and southern Indiana make up the urbanized area, both the states of Kentucky and Indiana are involved. Numerous agencies are members of the task force, including state and local engineering and enforcement personnel, emergency services, Transit Authority of River City (TARC), FHWA, KIPDA, the local radio station traffic tracker, Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center, and Regional Airport Authority. Interest and response has been excellent at all levels—federal, state, local, and private.

A smaller committee plans to develop strategies and present them to the task force for review. Development of a freeway incident management plan is the primary goal of the task force. This plan would initially focus on two locations within the Louisville area, but could be expanded to be more inclusive in the future. The two locations are the I-65 corridor north and south of the Ohio River and I-65 at I-264 near the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center, Standiford Airport, and Churchill Downs. The I-65 corridor north and south of the Ohio River has been an area where congestion and delays have been severe when incidents occur. The Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center/Airport/Churchill Downs area, served from I-65 and I-264, is the site of numerous special events throughout the year.

The purpose of freeway incident management is to minimize the impacts of incidents on traffic flow. This is done by reducing the duration of the incident and effectively managing traffic during the incident. This in turn can be achieved by good detection, response, and clearance of the incident while providing information to the public so as to reduce delays and manage traffic.

Initial concepts for accomplishing this could include improved communication/information systems, variable message signs (both permanent and portable), highway advisory radio, signing for pre-planned detours, and closed circuit television monitoring of selected locations. Other things already in place in the Louisville area, to some

extent, include helicopter traffic reporting, cellular phone traffic hotline, and motorist assistance patrols. Ultimately, as the program expands, a central control center will be given consideration. There is a promising new technology that Minnesota is developing called Autoscope. Autoscope is an advanced vehicle detection and automatic surveillance system. It utilizes video cameras overlooking the roadway (no detection loops are installed in the pavement) and superimposes loops on monitors for detection purposes.

It is hoped that the task force can forge a conceptual plan that could be given to a consultant to complete development and design of the Freeway Incident Management Plan. The FIM plan would ultimately become one part of an overall congestion management system.

Roadwise Educational Announcements

Finally, the third area pertaining to safety and public information involves spot educational announcements that we have had aired over WHAS radio. This effort at educational announcements is called ROADWISE.

We are all familiar with the three E's of Engineering, Enforcement and Education. It seems to me we need to put a little more emphasis on the third E—Education—from time to time. From some calls and letters we receive, it is apparent some motorists need to be better informed or educated about certain situations. From time to time, driving laws change or roadway innovations are made that may be different from when motorists took their driving test, or perhaps motorists need information to remind them of things they may have forgotten. We wrote twelve driving tips or ROADWISE announcements and WHAS traffic tracker Ron Robertson was able to air the spots as public service announcements on his ROAD REPORT radio program at noon. For the most effective coverage, it may be best to buy time during a.m. and p.m. drive time on several different format radio stations. Briefly, the ROADWISE topics covered include:

TOPIC 1: Stop lines at signalized intersections

"Why's this traffic light taking so long!" At intersections with traffic signals, if the light is red and you are the first car in line, be sure to stop at the stop line. There are detector loops at many intersections under the pavement just behind the stop line. If you pull beyond the stop line, the presence of your vehicle may not be detected and the signal may not change for you.

Be roadwise and make stopping at intersections hassle free.

TOPIC 2: Steady red arrows in signals for the left-turn lanes

Are the different types of traffic signals confusing to you? At intersections with traffic signals, a steady red arrow for the left-turn lane means stop. This does *not* mean a motorist may proceed with a left-turn after making a complete stop. The steady red arrow means the left-turn movement has terminated; motorists must wait for a green arrow before proceeding with a left turn.

Be roadwise and be safe.

TOPIC 3: Flashing traffic signal operation

When a traffic signal is flashing, there are different rules to follow. When a red light is flashing, drivers must stop and follow the same rules that apply at a stop sign. On the other hand, a flashing yellow light means drivers should proceed with caution. Be careful not to assume that all lights at an intersection are flashing the same color. The side street and main street may have different colored lights.

Be roadwise.

TOPIC 4: Two-way left turn lanes

"What's that lane in the center for?" A two-way, left-turn lane in the center of a highway is reserved exclusively for turning vehicles and must not be used for passing, overtaking, or normal travel. The lane may be used by drivers making a left turn in either direction. This lane is marked on either side by a solid and dashed yellow line, which means no passing is allowed. Remember, it is for left turns; you may not drive or pass in it.

Be roadwise and be careful.

TOPIC 5: Shoulders on interstates

If your car breaks down on an interstate highway, don't overestimate how safe you are on the shoulder (or emergency lane). Accidents involving vehicles on the shoulder of interstates in Kentucky account for 11-12 percent of the fatalities on these highways. If you have a breakdown, turn on your emergency flashers and park your vehicle on the shoulder as far to the right as possible, even partially off the shoulder. Don't work too near the edge of the driving lane. If someone is with you, have them keep an eye on traffic or do it yourself. Avoid standing behind the car or between two cars.

Be roadwise and be safe.

TOPIC 6: Milemarkers on interstates

Besides providing a means to locate emergencies and to aid in highway maintenance records, milemarkers on interstates can be of great assistance to travelers. They not only show direction, but also assist motorists in estimating progress and in planning rest stops.

The milemarker numbers increase as you travel from south to north or from west to east. So, you can tell the direction in which you are traveling if you're in an unfamiliar area.

In addition, milemarkers provide you with mileage information. Since the exits are numbered according to the nearest milemarker, you can judge the distance to the next exit. These exit numbers are shown on most highway maps.

TOPIC 7: Kentucky law on passing a school bus

In Kentucky, on two-lane or three-lane highways, it is unlawful to pass a school bus in either direction when it is loading or unloading children. On highways of four or more lanes, a stop is not required for vehicles traveling in the opposite direction.

Be roadwise and be safe.

TOPIC 8: Right or left turns on red

In Kentucky, at intersections with traffic signals, right turns are allowed on red *after stopping* unless prohibited by a sign which states "NO TURN ON RED." Left turns on red are allowed from the left lane of a one-way street onto the left lane of a one-way street *after stopping* unless prohibited by a "NO TURN ON RED" sign. Of course, all right- or left-turns-on-red shall yield to pedestrians or other traffic lawfully proceeding through the intersection.

Be roadwise and be safe.

TOPIC 9: Pedestrian signals

Regarding pedestrian signals, the "WALK" indication means a pedestrian may proceed straight across the roadway. However, be careful of conflicts with turning vehicles. The flashing "DON'T WALK" indication means a pedestrian must not start to cross the roadway, but any pedestrian who has partly completed his crossing must proceed. The steady "DON'T WALK" indication, means a pedestrian must not enter

the roadway. If pedestrian push buttons exist, be sure to push them, then wait for the appropriate signal to proceed.

Be roadwise and be careful.

TOPIC 10: Turning vehicles and pedestrians

When going to the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center for major events, keep in mind there are a number of gates into the facility. Most people tend to use the main gate off the Watterson Expressway on Phillips Lane. This entrance becomes overloaded at times. To avoid delays, motorists are reminded there are gates on Crittenden Drive (Gates 2 and 4) and a gate on Preston Highway (Gate 6). Depending on where you are coming from, be ROADWISE; it may be to your advantage to consider these other gates.

TOPIC 12: Left turns through queued traffic: courtesy or conflict

The situation: You are on a multilane highway wanting to make a left turn and oncoming traffic is stacked-up. A well-intended driver in the opposing direction stops and leaves a gap through which you can turn. Do not assume all is clear. There could still be opposing traffic coming in a lane that is partially obscured by the "courteous" driver and vehicles stacked behind him.

Be roadwise and be careful.

Other topics, such as the law on U-turns in Kentucky, could be periodically added for airing. Or, something as basic as the meaning of yellow lines. Yellow lines delineate the separation of traffic flows in opposing directions, or mark the left edge of the pavement of divided highways and one-way roads. An underlying goal here would be to make drivers realize a yellow edgeline on their right on a divided highway is very wrong and means they are going the wrong way. Divided highways: yellow on your left, white on your right.

A periodic effort such as this could assist to inform motorists regarding driving tips and driving law or roadway changes and, hopefully, enhance safety. Each announcement was concluded with the following tag: "This ROADWISE moment is brought to you by WHAS and the Kentucky Department of Highways who want you to be....ROADWISE.